

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

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A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. —Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. —Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

Starter Question

- From Sunday's sermon, what did you *like best*, or what *caught your attention most*—and *why*?

Observation—*What does it say?*

- Pastor Dan noted that the Apostle Paul's confidence in the Philippian church (1:1-8 & 4:15-16) coexisted with evident problems: [1] relational friction (1:9 & 27; 2:2-4 & 14-15; 4:2), [2] worry and joylessness (1:25; 2:18 & 28-29; 3:1; 4:4), and [3] theological risk (3:2-3 & 17-19). Does the former (Paul's confidence) protect them from danger from the latter (various problems)? Why or why not?

What two-pronged approach does Paul employ to protect his dear Philippian believers from danger?

[1] See 1:9-11 & 4:6-7 _____

[2] See 2:12-16 _____

Interpretation—*What does it mean?*

- Paul bases his rock-solid confidence in the Philippians' bright future on **God's actions**: initiating their salvation (1:6), currently shaping their desires and abilities (2:13), and guaranteeing the completion (1:6). So, are Christians passive in their growth and stability? Support your position biblically.
- Is Philippians 2:12b teaching that salvation is by works? Why or why not?

Application—*What do I do with this?*

- To what degree do the problems which plagued the Philippian believers impact you? On the following scale, mark to what degree you personally are impacted by [1] relational friction, [2] worry or joylessness, and [3] theological risk.



- Most people, it seems, are fairly comfortable that their view of God, religion and eternity are accurate. How confident are you? **How** would a person **even know** if he were mistaken theologically?

What are you doing to evaluate **your** theological understanding and make any necessary corrections?

Sermon Summary Main Text: Philippians 2:5-11

As we come to the end of our study of Paul's letter to the church of Philippi, we remind ourselves that this was a church with many strengths (see Philippians 1:1-5 & 6-8, 4:15-16 cf. 2 Corinthians 8:1-5). They, like every church, also had problems, specifically: [1] relational friction (1:9 & 27; 2:2-4 & 14-15; 4:2), [2] worry and joylessness (1:25; 2:18 & 28-29; 3:1; 4:4), and [3] theological risks (3:2-3 & 17-19). What is the solution to these problems? Close attention to repeated key words leads us to the answer. "Joy/rejoice" (the second most frequent concept) is clearly significant—it appears sixteen times. But in these four short chapters Paul referred to the Trinity ninety-nine times—and one particular Person in the Trinity, Jesus, receives 70% of those references! Paul clearly wanted the Philippians—and us—to realize that a profound understanding and appreciation of the person and work of Christ, is the solution to these—and every!—problem.

A quick review of the doctrine of the Trinity is in order. There is only one God, yet the Father, Son and Spirit each are equally divine. One God, three divine Persons. And yet the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit, the Spirit is not the Father...and so on. Exactly how this can be true is beyond our pea-brains, but the Bible clearly teaches it and so the faithful, humble person joyfully accepts it (see Job's response to God. For thirty-five chapters Job sought answers from God regarding his suffering, then in four chapters God showed Job that he was not up to the task, and Job responded in 4:1-6). We must learn that God is totally wise, loving and powerful—and that we exist only because he is bursting with holy love. And a profound understanding and appreciation of one of the persons in the Trinity—Jesus Christ—is the solution to every problem. The key text for doing that is Philippians 2:5-11 (see the Digging Deeper feature of today's Talking Points, Walking Points for further study).

Since eternity past, the Son has always been in the "form" (Greek: *morphē*) of God—having the real, essential, unchanging essence of God. On the outside, Jesus had the appearance (Greek: *schēma*) of a mere man—he looked like nothing more than a human. A proper understanding of the Trinity protects us from the errors most people make as they try to think of similar things in creation. They'll say "The Trinity's like an egg—it has a shell, a yolk, and a white, but it's all just one egg." Wrong! Each person of the Trinity has identical attributes—but when was the last time you ate an egg shell. The parts of an egg aren't made of the same stuff! Or, "The Trinity is like H₂O—it can be a liquid (water), a solid (ice), or a gas (steam)—but it's all H₂O. Error. Because the same molecule of H₂O cannot be liquid, solid, and gas at the same time, but the persons of the Trinity, Father, Son and Spirit, are co-eternal. Always existing at the same time, always distinct from one another. Although there's plenty of mystery surrounding the Trinity, everything this diagram says about the Trinity is true, and it prevents us from saying idolatrous things about God.

An understanding and appreciation of the person and work of Jesus Christ solves the problems in Philippi—and in our lives: relational friction, worry and joylessness, and theological risks. The god of Islam is lofty and disengaged from mankind—he's no help. Buddhism teaches to turn inward, to disconnect from—even to deny—human suffering. Not our God—he truly entered into our painful world. That's our God! Pantheism teaches that god is just part of, equal to, creation. Not holy and higher than creation. That brings no help for mankind's problems. But our God, lofty as he has been since all eternity, chose to humble himself and at great personal cost, he entered into his fallen creation. The god of secular materialism—"scientism"—is no help. Materialism which says that all you and I are, all anything is, is chemical and energy; just a cosmic accident. But Jesus has the true, inner essence of deity and the true inner essence of a slave, who serves us by saving us.

Gazing at and loving the true God gives us the humility to consider others more important than ourselves, solving relational friction. Euodia and Syntyche experienced some sort of betrayal in their friendship. Jesus understands—and forgives—betrayal. He has the power to resolve relational friction. Jesus was obedient to the point of death, so he can help us be willing to obey his command to love our neighbor as we love ourselves, overlooking relational friction.

An accurate understanding and appreciation of the person and work of Christ also impacts worry and joylessness. Jesus came to serve us (Mark 10:44-45)—what problem do you have that an omnipotent servant can't resolve? Eventually Christ, our Servant-Savior, will solve every problem that's causing us worry. He will fill us with his joy. But worries and joylessness don't even have to wait for heaven—Jesus gives us his joy and peace now (John 14:27; Philippians 4:6-7).

Finally, an accurate understanding and appreciation of the person and work of Christ protects us from theological risks. A lot of people are "deconstructing" their faith these days. Let us lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him who has endured such hostility by sinners against himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

An understanding and appreciation of the person and work of Jesus Christ solves the problems in Philippi, and in our lives!

Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time

*The church in Philippi was experiencing three main problems: (1) relational friction, (2) worry and joylessness, and (3) theological risks. When Clement heard that Paul wrote to his church (see *Philippians* 4:3), he learned that the solution was to gain a profound appreciation for the person and work of Jesus Christ (*Philippians* 2:5-11). This needs to be our "big take-away" too! Each day this week, your goal is to drink deeply from that same deep well...*

⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form (*morphē*) of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied (*kenosis*) Himself, taking the form (*morphē*) of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness (*homoīōma*) of men. ⁸ Being found in appearance (*schēma*) as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow*, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

* This is a quote from Isaiah 45:23, talking about God. Here it is applied to Jesus. So, Jesus = God!

- “Form” (v. 6) is the Greek word *morphē*, which refers to the **inner nature** of something—the essential, unchanging character of something; what it is in and of itself.
- “Likeness” (v. 7) is the Greek word *homoīōma*, which means “the state of being similar to something”.
- “Appearance” (v. 8) is the Greek word *schēma*, which refers to **outward form**.
- “Emptied” (v. 7) is the Greek word *kenosis*, which means “to make void”, “to nullify”, or “to make of no effect”. Jesus’ *kenosis* involved the complete removal or elimination of elements of high status or rank by the elimination of all privileges or prerogatives associated with that status or rank.

“Form” (*morphē*) does **not** mean that Christ only **appeared to be** divine and to be a slave. The clause, “though he **was** in the form of God” speaks about Christ’s preexistent state—ie, Christ **already was** of divine nature **before** he “emptied” himself. By definition it is impossible for the eternal, immutable God to cease to exist as God. Even in his state of humiliation the Lord Jesus could say, “I and the Father are one.” Even as man, he could legitimately claim that to see him was to see the Father. On the Mount of Transfiguration, the incarnate Son’s deity was revealed visibly, as he allowed the expression of his own divine essence to shine forth.

To ask, “**Of what** did Christ empty himself?” is a mistaken question. **Christ himself** is the object of this emptying; Christ nullified **himself**, Christ **made himself** of no reputation! Christ nullified **himself** “by taking on the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men”. Christ made **himself** of no reputation precisely **by** taking on a human nature. He emptied **himself** not by pouring out portions of his deity (which is impossible since God is immutable) but by **adding** to himself full and true humanity. His was an **emptying by addition, not by subtraction**. While the Son of God fully **possessed** his divine nature and prerogatives, he did not fully **express** them. He surrendered the preincarnate glories from which he came, submitting himself to misunderstanding, denials, unbelief, false accusations, and every sort of reviling and persecution. As God the Son, he had every right to exercise his divine prerogatives at will, yet he surrendered himself to the will of the Father in everything. His internal divine glory was still present, though temporarily veiled by him being in the form of a servant. No conceptualization of the *kenosis* can be consistent with Scripture if that concept makes it impossible for Christ to assert **equality** with God (v. 6).